

Childhood injuries in the home

Each year, more than 4.5 million children age 14 and under are treated in hospital emergency rooms for injuries incurred in the home. In 1997, approximately 2,600 children age 14 and under died in the home from unintentional injuries. Nearly 70% of these deaths occurred among children ages 4 and under. Home injury deaths are caused primarily by fire and burns, drowning, suffocation, choking, firearms, poisoning, and falls. Young children are at the greatest risk from unintentional injuries in the home because it is where they spend the majority of their time. As children grow older, they spend less time in the home and therefore the incidents of injuries decrease with age.

The primary place in the home where childhood injuries occur is the kitchen. This is not a surprise because most of our time at home is

spent in the kitchen. It is the most common and popular gathering place for meals and visiting. In the kitchen, a child is primarily exposed to injuries from burns, poisons, and falls.

Burns

- ✓ Burns are the number one cause of injuries to children. In 1997, approximately 680 children died from fires and burns in the home. Of these children, two thirds were ages 4 and under.
- ✓ Always turn pot handles inward. Cooking pot handles extending outward from the stove can result in a scalding burn if a child reaches for it.
- ✓ Always keep cords up on the counter out of sight. Appliance cords hanging off a counter can result in a coffeepot spilling onto a child.

- ✓ Do not handle hot liquids while holding a child or if the child is at your feet. An adult with a hot beverage can burn a child if bumped suddenly.

- ✓ Never leave you child unsupervised while cooking. Children using the stove to make soup or cookies can result in unnecessary burns.
- ✓ Keep matches and lighters out of your child's reach.

Poisons

In 1997, nearly 100 children died from poisonings in the home. More than half of these deaths were due to solids and liquids such as medicines and cleaners.

- ✓ Keep poisons and household cleaners out of your child's reach or install safety latches. The cabinet under the kitchen sink is a

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- very attractive place for a toddler to explore.
- ✓ Never store poisons or cleaners in food or beverage containers.
 - ✓ Never assume children cannot open childproof containers. They can.
 - ✓ Keep poisonous plants, like the common philodendron, out of reach. Biting on a leaf can cause swelling of the tongue and throat, resulting in an obstruction of the airway.
 - ✓ Use liquid dishwasher soap rather than granules. If you have a toddler that likes to help unload and there are granules left in the soap container, they may put some in their mouth. These granules are

- ✓ as caustic as Drano and will result in an immediate trip to the emergency room.
- ✓ Keep handy a bottle of Ipecac syrup—medication used to induce vomiting. Do not administer it to your child unless told to by a physician or poison control center.

Falls

In 1997, more than 100 children died as the result of falls in the home. More than half these children were age 4 and under.

- ✓ Use safety straps to secure your child in high chairs and carrying seats. It only takes a few seconds for a child to stand up in a high chair or tip out of an infant seat.

- ✓ Keep infants and toddlers away from staircases. Use gates at the top of all stairways and add hooks to basement doors.
- ✓ Do not leave your child unattended in an infant walker. Many children are injured when they tumble down the stairs in walkers.

For more information, or to file a complaint, contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection at:

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(Statistics quoted are nationwide and were compiled 12/98 by the National SAFE KIDS campaign.)